

SAFE, Inc.

Offering survivors of domestic and sexual violence options for safety, empowerment, healing, and hope



Holiday 2012 Newsletter

Contributions will help start accredited child advocacy center

SAFE launches fundraising campaign to improve care for abused children

The community is invited to contribute to a fundraising campaign to improve care for abused children in Wilkes County.

Donations to the "Better Care for Abused Children" campaign will help SAFE start an accredited child advocacy center in Wilkes. The new center will provide comprehensive services to children and families affected by sexual abuse or severe physical abuse.

Hundreds of children are abused each year

It's a sad fact...child sexual abuse is a big problem in Wilkes County. During a three year period from 2008 through 2010:

- Wilkes County law enforcement agencies investigated 356 sex crimes involving minors.
- The Wilkes Department of Social Services received 172 reports of child sexual abuse.
- The District Attorney's Office prosecuted 96 felony offenders for offenses against children.



Sadly, abuse is growing in Wilkes County. Child sexual abuse reports to Wilkes DSS increased 18% in 2011. 

Need for the center is critical

Without the center, Wilkes County children are suffering needlessly.

Currently, social workers, police and prosecutors each gather information separately, forcing victims to relive their abuse over and over.

Victim care isn't well coordinated, and some services are only available out of town, so many children don't get all the help they need to heal.

Center will reduce retraumatization

At the new child advocacy center, the abused child will be interviewed just once. The interview will take place within the private, child-friendly confines of the center. The interview will be recorded, and members of the investigating team will be able to view the interview via closed circuit TV

(Continued on page 5)

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On the Inside

In Their Own Words: A Fresh Start, Thanks to You	2
Keena Eller Joins SAFE Staff as Child Victim Advocate	2
SAFE's 2012 Givers to Date	3-4

NEED HELP? PLEASE CALL 838-SAFE (838-7233) ANYTIME

Mrs. Eller will help launch new center, provide direct service to children and families

Keena Eller joins SAFE as child victim advocate

Keena Eller has been named coordinator of SAFE's new child advocacy center.



Keena Eller

Keena will take a leading role in launching the center, which will assist children and families affected by child sexual abuse or severe physical abuse.

Once the center is fully functioning, Keena will provide ongoing support to abused children and non-offending family members. She will also lead a multidisciplinary team that will meet regularly to coordinate child abuse investigations.

Keena comes to SAFE from Apple Tree Academies in Millers Creek, where she served as assistant director. She will graduate from Appalachian State

University later this month with a degree in early childhood education.

With thirteen years experience working with children and families, Keena says she's ready for her new role helping children heal after abuse.

"Children and families are my passion," she said. "My goal is to change the world, one child at a time," she said.

Keena is a native of Wilkes County. Keena, her husband Tony, and their children Dylan, Kaitlyn and Ashlyn live in Millers Creek. They attend Pilgrim Baptist Church.

"Keena will bring a unique perspective on the cognitive, social and emotional development of the children we serve," SAFE executive director Kristi Thomas said. "Keena's skill set will play a pivotal role as SAFE moves forward in establishing an accredited child advocacy center." ✂

In their own words: Safety and peace, thanks to you

Your gifts help victims of family violence make a new start after abuse. Here are some comments we've received recently from women helped by SAFE.

- "Everyone on the staff is so helpful and caring."—*Shelter Client, September 2012*
- "Without you, my children would be back with our abuser."—*Shelter Client, August 2012*
- "It feels very safe and homey."—*Shelter Client, September 2012*
- "The staff was very welcoming and have been there any night I needed to just talk. Everyone here has made a huge impact."—*Shelter Client, November 2012*
- "No woman deserves to be abused. SAFE will help you get back on your feet."—*Shelter Client, October 2012*
- "I really love the people here. They helped me deal with all I went through. I thank God for a place like this."—*Shelter Client, August 2012*
- "I have a friend who is going to need this kind of support soon, and this is the only place I would recommend to her."—*Shelter Client, July 2012*
- "I have peace in my life."—*Shelter Client, October 2012* ✂

"SAFE has been a huge blessing and support."

-Shelter Client, August 2012

SAFE's 2012 Givers to Date

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of everyone who has contributed to SAFE through Nov. 30, 2012. Giving circles, memorials and honorary gifts will be announced in our next newsletter.

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*“Don’t judge each day by the harvest
you reap but by the seeds you plant.”*

Robert Louis Stevenson




Continued on page 4

SAFE's 2012 Givers to Date

Continued from page 3

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*“The love we give
away is the only
love we keep.”*

Elbert Hubbard

Center will improve care, help convict adults who prey on children

Campaign to benefit new center for abused children

Continued from page 1

and communicate with the interviewer in real time. The risk of retraumatization will be greatly reduced.

Center will help children get the services they need

While the victim is being interviewed, non-offending caregivers will meet with Keena Eller, the center's victim advocate. She is the family's point of first contact, and will serve as their supporter and liaison throughout the healing process.

Keena will help link the child to counseling, medical care and other needed services, and she'll stay in touch over time to be sure the child continues to receive needed services.

Children served by a child advocacy center are much more likely to get the help they need to heal. One study found victims served by a child advocacy center were more than twice as likely to receive support services.

Victim assistance, counseling and the initial medical examination will all be provided under one roof at the center.

Center will help prosecutors get offenders off the streets

The new center will improve the community's ability to prosecute adults who prey on children. Trained forensic interviewers will gather detailed information from children. A team of law enforcement officers, child protective services personnel, prosecutors, advocates and care providers will meet regularly to coordinate investigations.

Team investigations result in quicker response times, more prosecutions and more guilty pleas.

Center for Policy Research

Renovations will begin soon to create new child advocacy center

Work will begin soon to convert a 1,200 square foot office suite for use as the new center. Donations to the campaign will help create four special-purpose rooms:

- The **forensic interview room** will be a cozy, acoustically-isolated area for one-on-one interviews with children. This room will include a concealed closed circuit camera system.
- The **live observation room** will be equipped with a monitor to allow team members to

observe interviews in real time. The team will be able to communicate with the interviewer via an earpiece.

- The **medical room** will be equipped with an exam table and typical medical equipment. The room will also include a colposcope, a device with a camera that is used to examine and collect evidence from victims of sexual assault. The medical room will have an adjacent handicapped-accessible restroom.
- The **therapy room** will accommodate counseling sessions and meetings with parents and caregivers.



SAFE Board Chairperson Erica Walker points out vacant space that will become the center's therapy room. The space is adjacent to SAFE's new offices on College Avenue in Wilkesboro.

"Grant funding will not completely cover the cost of renovations. We're counting on a caring community to help get the new center up and running," SAFE's Kristi Thomas said. 🙏

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SAFE, Inc.

Sheltered Aid to Families in Emergencies

P.O. Box 445
1260 College Avenue, Suite 5
Wilkesboro, NC 28697

Office Phone: (336) 838-9169
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We're online at www.safewilkes.org



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INSIDE: SAFE LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO IMPROVE CARE FOR ABUSED CHILDREN

FROM THE DIRECTOR: THE ANSWER TO A PRAYER

Jennifer Bush, our victim service coordinator, is normally the picture of patience, but she was at her wits end last week trying to help a desperate young mother avoid homelessness. Jan (not her real name) and her young autistic son have been living in SAFE's shelter since September. An older son is living with family friends.



Jennifer Bush

"Jan and the kids put up with many years of abuse," Jennifer says. Finally, after Jan's husband hurt one of the kids, Jan moved out and entered the shelter.

"Jan has been very proactive at seeking help," Jennifer says. She's getting counseling and so is her

younger son. Jan's working hard to start a new life, free from abuse.

Jan applied for low-income housing, and, after a long wait, finally got accepted. Jan's joy quickly faded when she learned that she needed \$400 up front for rent and power.

Jennifer told Jan, don't worry, we'll help you find the funds. That was easier said than done.

Jennifer sent Jan all over town to seek help. Some funding sources were tapped out. Other places said, we'll help, but only if you can find other help too. Jennifer found \$60 through the United Way's online help board, but it wasn't enough.

Jan and her son could only stay in the shelter 90 days. Her time would

be up two days before Christmas. Homeless at Christmas. That was too much for Jennifer to take, so she took it to the Lord.

"I was praying about this situation when a donor called and interrupted my prayer." The donor agreed to provide the money Jan needed to start over.

Jennifer was blown away by the donor's generosity. "I was in tears," Jennifer said.

So does your gift to SAFE really make a difference?

Let's just say it could be the answer to a prayer. 🙏

Kristi

Kristian Thomas

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